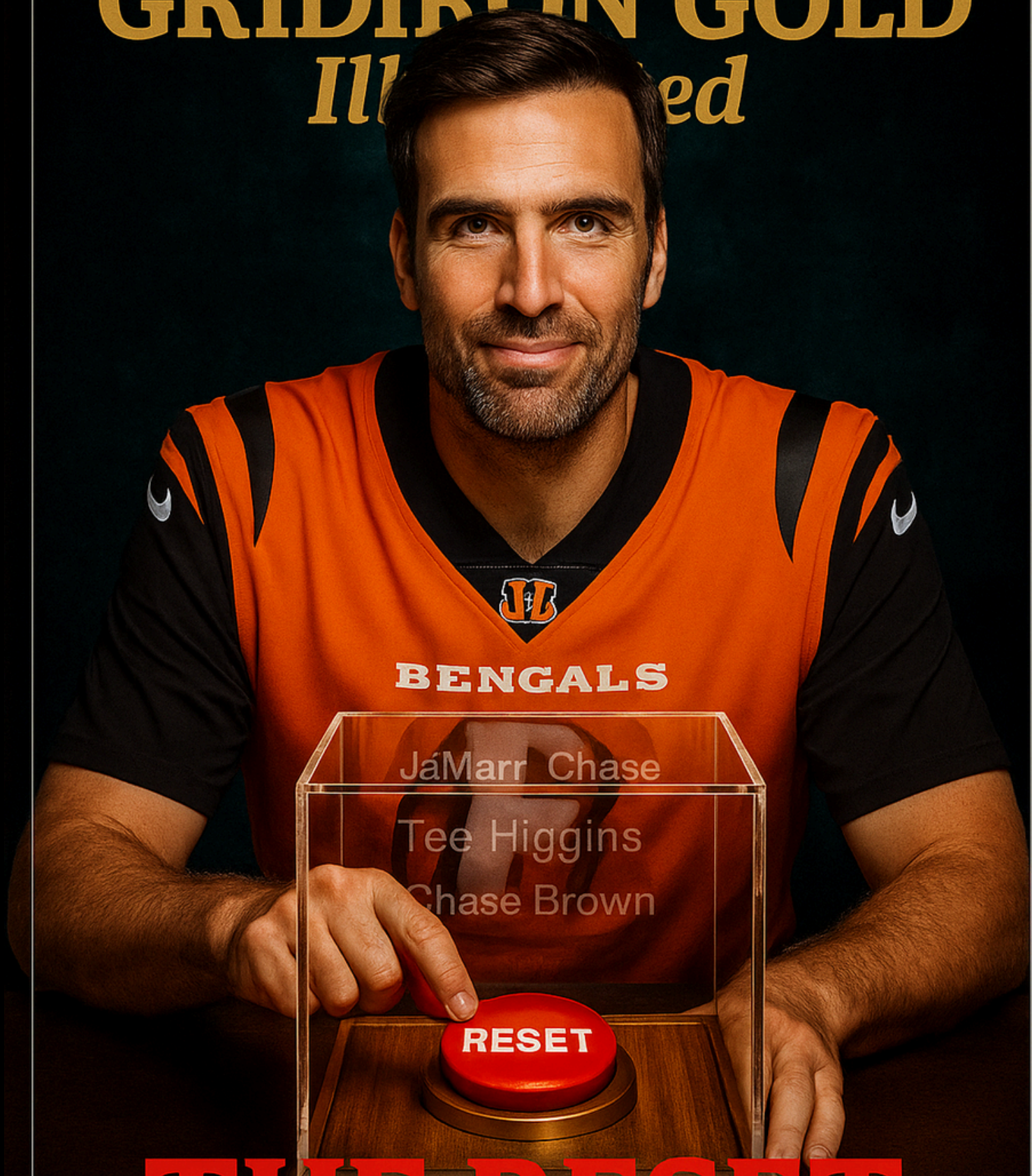


GRIDIRON GOLD

Ill-fated



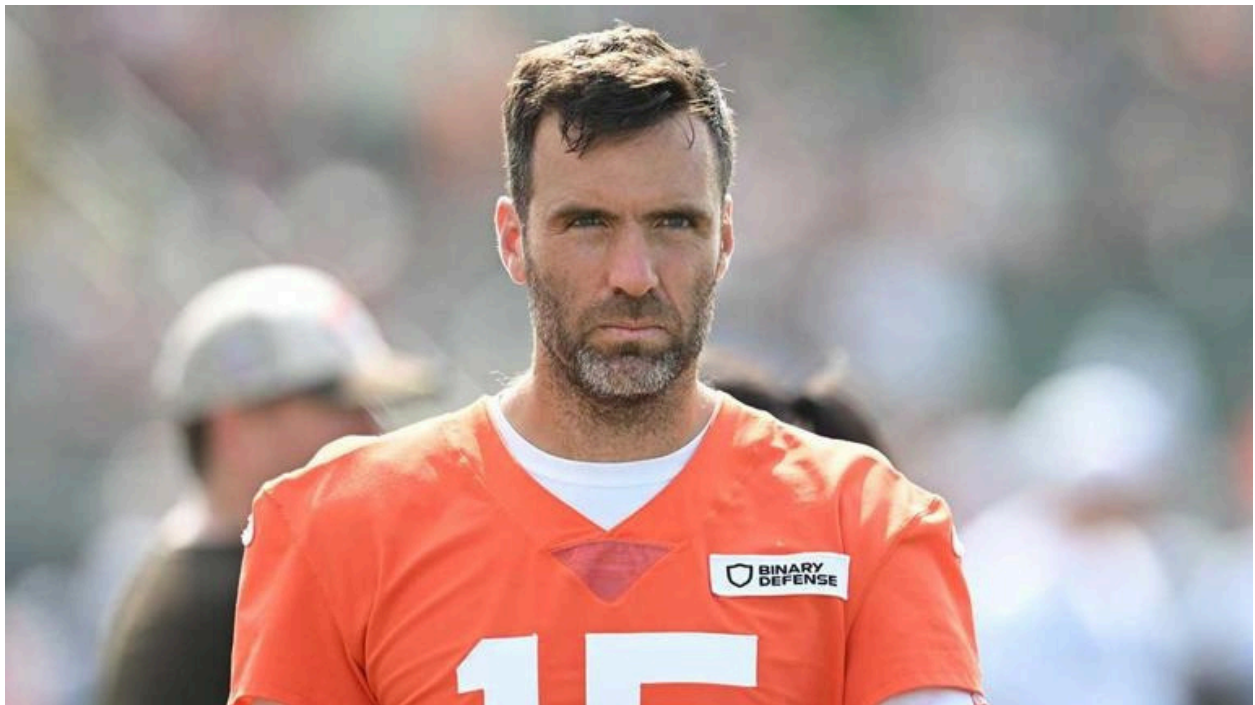
THE RESET

Fins In Low Places, Hobpton, and The Wrecking Crew Pray Flacco Hits the Button

THE FLACCO FACTOR

FROM THE WRECKING CREW TO FINS IN LOW PLACES TO HOBBDON –
THE VETERAN QB’S INFLUENCE COULD REWRITE THE MIDSEASON
FANTASY LANDSCAPE

BY JENNIFER RAE



In a league defined by chaos, Joe Flacco represents something else entirely: stability, at least, that’s what three fantasy franchises in Gridiron Gold are counting on. When the Cincinnati Bengals traded for the 40-year-old veteran from Cleveland, it wasn’t just an AFC North storyline. It was a lifeline.

The Wrecking Crew (3–2), Fins In Low Places (3–2), and Hobbdon (2–3) all roster key pieces of the Bengals’ offense—Ja’Marr Chase, Tee Higgins, and Chase Brown, respectively. Each player’s value had been trapped under the weight of an anemic passing game since Joe Burrow’s injury and Jake Browning’s erratic run at quarterback. But now, with Flacco under center, there’s a flicker of hope.

Whether that flicker turns into a full reset, or another round of frustration, will define the middle stretch of the season.

Ja'Marr Chase: The Wrecking Crew's WR1 Reawakening

For the Wrecking Crew, Chase isn't just a player, he's the pulse. When Burrow went down, Chase's ceiling followed him. Even so, he's managed to stay relevant, ranking inside the top 10 among receivers in total fantasy points through five games. But relevance isn't what the Crew drafted him for, they drafted him to dominate.

Enter Joe Flacco.

According to *Newsweek*, Flacco "represents an immediate upgrade" over Browning and gives Chase a realistic path back to WR1 production. The veteran has a proven ability to feed star wideouts even when the system isn't built for fireworks. He's less improvisational than Burrow, but more decisive than Browning, a combination that could restore Chase's rhythm routes and deep timing patterns.

The Wrecking Crew sits tied atop the Shula Division, and Chase is the hinge point between "contender" and "favorite." His chemistry with Flacco won't materialize overnight, but the upside is undeniable. In *fantasy football*, sometimes "average quarterback play" is all elite receivers need. If Flacco can merely keep the offense functional, Chase's consistency returns.

And for Crew GM Tony McGriff, that's all he's asking for, a reset, not a revolution.

Tee Higgins: A Chance for Fins In Low Places to Stabilize

If Chase represents the Wrecking Crew's foundation, Tee Higgins has been the enigma for Fins In Low Places. Once a steady WR2 with red-zone upside, he's been nearly unstartable this season. Through five games, Higgins has just 13 catches for 158 yards and two scores, numbers that scream bench depth, not lineup lock.

But if there's one player with the most to gain from Flacco's arrival, it's Higgins.

With Browning, Cincinnati's offense had no rhythm, and Higgins, often dependent on precise timing routes, was the biggest casualty. Flacco changes that. While his days of throwing 50-yard bombs are behind him, his intermediate accuracy remains intact. That's where Higgins lives.

Fantasy analysts have already flagged him as a potential “buy-low” candidate, with *Newsweek* predicting a “dramatic increase in opportunities” once Flacco takes over. It’s not about spectacular numbers, it’s about restoring a baseline. For a Fins squad sitting at 3–2 and chasing the Lombardi Division–leading Appalachian Mud Dogs, that baseline could be the difference between a playoff berth and another season of “what-ifs.”

If Flacco can simply keep the Bengals on schedule, Higgins becomes viable again. And for the Fins, that’s all they need — a wide receiver who stops tanking drives and starts sustaining them.

Chase Brown: Hobbton’s Forgotten Weapon Gets a Second Chance

No fantasy manager has watched the Bengals’ dysfunction sting more than Hobbton’s Charles Thomas. Chase Brown, once touted as a breakout RB2, has been stuck in neutral since Week 1. With Browning under center, defenses stacked the box and dared Cincinnati to throw. The result: Brown averaged just 2.5 yards per carry and 5.3 yards per reception through five games.

Flacco, however, brings something Brown desperately needs — balance.

While in Cleveland earlier this season, Flacco leaned heavily on his running backs in the passing game. Dylan Sampson, Jerome Ford, and Quinshon Judkins all had multi-catch outings under his leadership. For Hobbton, that’s the blueprint. Brown’s value doesn’t have to come from volume rushing, it can come from swing passes, screens, and checkdowns, the quiet plays that turn into PPR gold.

Hobbton’s 2–3 record belies its potential. With Sam King already declaring the team “still destined for the title” in Week 1, it’s fitting that Hobbton’s hopes now rest on Flacco’s willingness to dump it off.

Flacco’s Impact: The Veteran as Fantasy Stabilizer

For Cincinnati, this isn’t about reliving the past. It’s about salvaging the present. Flacco’s not Burrow, and no one expects him to be. But his arrival reopens the playbook for three key fantasy assets that had flatlined.

At 3–2, the Wrecking Crew needs Chase to separate from the pack. At 3–2, the Fins need Higgins to stabilize their WR2 slot behind Tee Higgins’ counterpart, Marvin Harrison Jr. And at 2–3, Hobbton just needs Chase Brown to look alive again.

In *Newsweek*'s words, "Flacco represents good news for everyone" in this offense. That's the optimism these teams are banking on.

For fantasy managers and Gridiron Gold GMs alike, it's less about believing in Flacco's arm and more about believing in his presence. He's steady, efficient, and experienced, the kind of quarterback who brings order to chaos.

And maybe, just maybe, that's the reset button everyone's been waiting for.

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COMING IN WEEK 18





CHASE RESURRECTED AS CREW STOPS THE SKID

For two straight weeks, the Wrecking Crew looked like a team stuck in reverse. The swagger was gone, the rhythm off, and the scoreboard unforgiving. But in Week 5, the storm finally broke and it did so with thunder.

Jayden Daniels, back in command after a brief absence, steadied the ship early with smart decisions and timely runs. His 17.14 points weren't fireworks, but they were the spark the Crew needed. Then came the explosion: **Ja'Marr Chase**. After weeks of whispers questioning whether the magic had faded, Chase silenced every doubter with a 32-point masterpiece, racking up 110 yards and two touchdowns like it was 2021 all over again.

Kyren Williams followed suit with 31.10, bulldozing through defenders and catching passes like a man possessed, while **Darren Waller** and the **Colts** defense added exclamation points to a much-needed 157.74 point outburst. From start to finish, the Crew looked like themselves again—hungry, focused, dangerous.

Across the field, it was heartbreak for the Travelers. **Patrick Mahomes** delivered everything a franchise quarterback could – 30.72 points, a blend of precision and grit, but he stood alone. Rookie Running Back **Woody Marks** could only muster 2.4 points, and the rest of the lineup followed suit, stuck in neutral as their record slid to 1–4. Afterward, frustration spilled into the locker room.

Patrick Mahomes, voice tight but composed: "This is a team sport. I'll do my part, but we've all got to execute." **Delilah Sandoval**, the team's weary media director, didn't mince words either: "We've got to see more fire. Mahomes can't carry this thing alone."

Meanwhile, the Wrecking Crew locker room felt lighter than it had in weeks.

Jayden Daniels, grinning after the win: "Glad to be back out there. The rhythm's coming together again." Ja'Marr Chase, never one to shy from the spotlight, smirked and said: "Rumors of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

Even media chief **Deb Levi** got in on the fun: "We'll try to keep Ja'Marr's resurrection stories under control, but hey, when the man puts up 32, you let him talk."

Now the Crew turns its focus to a high-stakes Shula Division rematch with DBarber, the team they edged out by less than a single point in Week 1. As for the Travelers, they'll face Pud's Playmakers in a Lombardi Division clash that could define their season. One team is fighting to rise; the other, to survive. Week 6 is about redemption, and neither side plans to blink.



DRAGON LADY BREATHES FIRE AS BANDITS FALL SHORT

Sometimes the difference between triumph and heartbreak isn't a bad call, a blown play, or even a late interception. Sometimes it's pure bad luck. For the 1024 Bandits, Week 5 was one of those weeks.

The game started with promise. **Amon-Ra St. Brown** and **Deebo Samuel** came out swinging, each crossing the 20-point mark and keeping the Bandits within striking distance. Deebo's relentless playmaking and Amon-Ra's smooth, chain-moving precision looked like the foundation of a comeback. But that hope was short-lived. When **Bucky Irving** was ruled out with an injury, everything changed. The offense lost its heartbeat, the balance vanished, and what might've been a statement win turned into a game of "what ifs."

Replacing Irving with his backup, **Rachaad White**, could've changed everything, but hindsight offers no mercy. Instead, the Bandits were left watching as **Justin Herbert** fought to keep things close before the inevitable 138.22 to 109.74 final.

On the other sideline, Dragon Lady showed once again why she's perched atop the standings. **Justin Fields** looked like a man reborn, throwing darts, scrambling for extra yards, and lighting up the scoreboard for 25.92 points. **Jaylen Waddle** followed with his best outing of the season, flashing that trademark swagger with 110 yards and a touchdown. Together, they led a balanced, confident team that continues to win in style.

But even victory came with a hint of restraint.

Sterling Jones, Dragon Lady's media director, offered perspective: "We're thrilled with the win, but you never like seeing an injury become the story. That's not how you want to take one."

From the Bandits' side, **DeAndre Bell** struck a similar tone: "Not having Bucky just crushed the flow. You never want to see a matchup shift on something like that. Credit to Dragon Lady, they earned it. Hopefully, we meet again down the stretch when everyone's healthy."

Now the paths diverge. The Bandits will look to regroup in Week 6 against Fins in Low Places, who are riding high after sinking Pud's Playmakers in a divisional dogfight. Meanwhile, Dragon Lady prepares for a date with the Appalachian Mud Dogs, a team still licking its wounds after a shocking blowout loss to the Avengers. One's seeking redemption, the other domination, and both know that in this league, momentum can turn as fast as an ankle can twist.



AVENGERS ASSEMBLE AGAIN IN DOMINANT BOUNCE-BACK WIN

The Appalachian Mud Dogs came into Week 5 looking to regain their momentum after an upset loss to Travelers in Week 4. Instead, they ran headfirst into a buzzsaw. The Avengers Team didn't just win, they overwhelmed, dismantled, and outclassed the Dogs in every phase of the game, cruising to a 142.48–93.68 victory.

It was clear from the beginning of the Sunday games that **Dak Prescott** was in complete control. Four touchdown passes, 237 yards through the air, and 28.28 fantasy points later, he had reestablished himself as the steady hand at the heart of the Avengers' offense. But the true knockout punch came from **Christian McCaffrey**, who was once again a force of nature. With 82 rushing yards, 83 receiving yards, and a touchdown, CMC's 27.90 points reminded everyone why he's the league's ultimate cheat code. Together, the duo accounted for over 56 points, almost half the team's total, and left the Mud Dogs chasing shadows all afternoon.

For Appalachian Mud Dogs, the frustration continues to mount. **Bo Nix** (17.88) and **Puka Nacua** (24.50) gave the Dogs early hope, showing fight where others faltered. But the rest of the lineup fell flat. **Derrick Henry**, once the team's identity, managed just 9.30 points in another subdued outing, while **James Cook**, **Mark Andrews**, and **Travis Etienne** offered little help. The 93.68 final score wasn't just a defeat, it was a reflection of a roster in need of recalibration.

After the game, Mud Dogs media director **Joe Riddle** summed it up simply: "We're scratching our heads a bit. The talent's there, but the roster clearly needs work. We've got to figure this thing out before it slips away."

Meanwhile, confidence radiated from the Avengers' camp. **Lauren Beltran**, ever the cool spokesperson, kept her message sharp: "We're feeling good. This team's built to compete every week, and we're already looking forward to Week 6."

That next test comes against a slumping Hobbton squad that's dropped two straight and suddenly looks vulnerable. The Avengers, fresh off their best performance of the season, will look to keep the pressure on.

The Mud Dogs, on the other hand, face their toughest challenge yet, a showdown with the surging Dragon Lady, whose firepower burned through 1024 Bandits in a highly anticipated showdown.

For the Mud Dogs, it's gut-check time. For the Avengers, it's liftoff.



DEM WALLZ HOLD STRONG AS DBARBER STRUGGLES THROUGH THE BYE

Week 5 brought two teams fighting uphill battles for very different reasons. DBarber, handcuffed by key player on bye, and Dem Wallz, forced to overcome major injuries, squared off in a game defined by survival instincts. When the dust settled, **Chanel's** squad walked away with a gritty 103.74–80.78 victory.

For DBarber, the struggle began before kickoff. With both **Jordan Love** and **Romeo Doubs** sidelined on bye, the team's depth was tested, and it showed. **Jaxson Dart** filled in admirably at quarterback, posting 17.58 points behind 202 passing yards, two touchdowns, and 55 on the ground. Tight end **Sam LaPorta** once again proved to be a bright spot, racking up 92 yards and a touchdown for 20.20 points. But outside of those two, production dried up fast. **A.J. Brown** and **Darius Slayton** failed to make a dent, and the running game sputtered, leaving DBarber with another frustrating week.

Meanwhile, Dem Wallz entered shorthanded but unfazed. With both **Lamar Jackson** and **Trey Benson** out, backup **Tua Tagovailoa** stepped into the spotlight and delivered 22.74 points on 256 passing yards with three touchdowns. But the supporting spark came from the superstar duo of **Justin Jefferson** and **Dalton Kincaid**, who combined for nearly 42 points. Jefferson carved up Cleveland's secondary for 123 yards and a score, while Kincaid quietly hauled in six catches for 108 yards in a game that kept the Dem Wallz offense rolling despite their injuries. Afterward, both camps were candid.

Barber Media Relations Director **Jose Vargas** didn't mince words. Frustration written all over his face, he summed up the team's struggles bluntly: "You can't game plan around half your offense being on bye. We did what we could, but the limitations were obvious."

Across the field, **Greg Cantrell**, speaking for Dem Wallz, took a different tone, one of gratitude and quiet pride. "With Lamar and Trey both down, it was about the next man up," he said. "Tua answered the call, and the team showed real heart this week."

Now both squads shift their focus to divisional battles that could define their seasons. DBarber heads into a Shula Division grudge match with The Wrecking Crew, a rematch of their Week 1 nail-biter that came down to less than a point, while Dem Wallz look to build momentum in a Gibbs Division clash with The Bad Guys, hoping to prove that grit and depth can still carry the day.

Injuries, byes, and setbacks aside, Week 6 will tell us which of these teams can turn survival into resurgence.



BAD GUYS STRIKE BACK, SILENCE HOBBTON HYPE MACHINE

It took four weeks, but The Bad Guys finally got their revenge. In a rematch loaded with history and hostility, Anthony's squad delivered a 148.80 to 139.32 statement win against the brash, boastful Hobbton team that had spent a month living off its Week 1 glory.

That first meeting wasn't just a win for Hobbton, it was a declaration. Media rep **Sam King** famously called it "destiny," while team leader **Charles Thomas** doubled down with championship talk that turned heads across the league. The Bad Guys didn't forget. And in Week 5, they showed up with receipts.

The game was a high-scoring thriller from start to finish. **Josh Allen** did everything in his power to keep Hobbton afloat, putting up 20.42 points with 253 passing yards, two touchdowns, and another 53 on the ground. **Jaxon Smith-Njigba** had a career day, exploding for 132 yards and a touchdown on his way to 30.20 points, proof that his hype was real. Together, they kept Hobbton in the fight until the very end.

But the Bad Guys had a force of their own in **Emeka Egbuka**, who torched Seattle's defense for 163 yards and a score, racking up a dominant 34.30 fantasy points, the difference-maker in the matchup. **Rachaad White** added 23.10 more, grinding out tough yards and sealing drives that kept the Bad Guys comfortably ahead. Even with **Kyler Murray** held to 15.30, the team's depth and composure carried them through.

When it was over, the scoreboard told the story but the silence afterward said even more. Hobbton refused to address the media postgame, a sharp contrast to the bravado that followed their first victory. Bad Guys media director **Arthur Robinson**, calm and composed as ever, couldn't resist a measured jab: "Their no comment says plenty. Looks like divine intervention didn't make the trip this time."

Now the road ahead gets interesting. Hobbton, reeling at 2-3, will look to regroup against a surging Avengers Team that just dismantled the Mud Dogs in Week 5. Meanwhile, The Bad Guys, back in the win column for another week and brimming with quiet confidence, turn their focus to Dem Wallz, a team fresh off a gritty win despite multiple injuries.

The message from this one is clear: Hobbton's "destiny" just hit another major detour, and the Bad Guys are back in business.



FINS RISE AGAIN, MAKE A STATEMENT IN THE LOMBARDI

After a stunning upset loss to DBarber in Week 4, Fins in Low Places needed a response, and they delivered one loud enough to echo across the Lombardi Division. In a matchup that carried early-season playoff implications, the Fins surged past Pud's Playmakers 149.54–125.10, reclaiming their footing and reminding the league why they're an unexpected contender.

From the first snap, the Fins played with purpose. **Jonathan Taylor**, once again looking like the workhorse Indy paid for, ran wild with 31.60 fantasy points, racking up 66 rushing yards, three receptions, and three touchdowns in a complete performance. Meanwhile, **Rico Dowdle** stole the spotlight with an unexpected explosion of 206 total yards, a touchdown, and a massive 35.40 points, turning what was supposed to be a balanced effort into a rout. Add in steady leadership from **Jared Goff** (20.12) and reliable output from **David Montgomery** (18.22), and the Fins looked like the dangerous, balanced machine that had been missing the week before.

On the other side, Pud's Playmakers came in riding high after knocking off Hobbton in Week 4 but they ran into a tidal wave. Still, there were bright spots. **Jalen Hurts** put up 19.50 points with 280 passing yards, two touchdowns, and his trademark rushing production, while **Courtland Sutton** stayed hot, catching eight balls for 99 yards and a score, good for 17.90 points. But the supporting cast faltered down the stretch and couldn't keep up with the Fins' multifaceted attack. After the game, both teams took measured tones.

Jasmine Nesmith, Fins Media Relations Director, reflected with patience and poise: "It's a long season. You don't win it in October. We're taking it one game at a time." Meanwhile, **Will Powers**, the Playmakers' fiery media lead, struck a realistic note despite the loss: "We overperformed in spots, but not where it counted. You can't win in this league without closing drives and we didn't."

Looking ahead, both squads face pivotal Week 6 tests. Fins in Low Places collide with the 1024 Bandits, who are looking to shake off their own frustration after losing to Dragon Lady. It's a clash of momentum versus motivation. For Pud's Playmakers, the path doesn't get easier—they draw the Travelers in what could be a make-or-break Lombardi battle for both teams' playoff hopes.

For now, though, the message is clear: the Fins are back, focused, and swimming toward something bigger.